



## **Praying the Word Series Week 5 - Being Profoundly Loved**

*April 21, 2024 - Pastor Jason Carter*

### **John 15:1-11**

John 13-17 is one scene around the last supper where Jesus gives some last instructions. He is laying His heart out for them in the last conversation before the cross and is explaining how He desires our relationship- to God, to each other as Christians and to our world- should be.

God does not desire performance at the expense of relationship. He doesn't just want us to follow the rules. He wants relationship that shapes and transforms our heart and behavior. The only way this happens is through relationship with Jesus.

**Jesus desires and commands Connection.** He uses the example of the vine and the branches. We are not connected as in it is a "part of our life" but rather, becomes the **true source of our life**. In our life, we will be conformed to Jesus and His will.

**The word intimacy finds its roots from the Latin word "intimus," which means 'inner' or 'innermost.'**

- It is the feeling of closeness and a bond that runs deeper than an acquaintance.
- Intimacy is not easy. True intimacy must be worked on and worked toward.

Why do you think intimacy is so difficult? What about it makes it hard?

**John 15:1-2** I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Jesus is using vivid imagery. He is using a picture of a physical vine to explain a spiritual reality. He is speaking to the historical, relational aspect between Israel and God and how repeatedly, through generations, Israel had turned their back on God. Israel's religious leaders bragged about how God chose them and yet willfully refused to allow God to change their heart.

They are used to following God through a set of rules, but they would not pursue God in relationship. **God wanted their heart.** Their lack of intimacy and closeness with the Lord allows for them to deceive themselves as they followed the rules.

**Psalm 80:8-9** You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.

**Jeremiah 2:21** I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine?

This, too, can happen to us. We can go through the motions of Christianity but not allow God near or not allow Him to transform our hearts and lives. We can serve Him without knowing Him. We can do the "things" of God without being connected to Him.

Are you doing the things of God without being connected to Him? Is your heart drawn towards Him or far from Him?

**John 15:2** He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

- Gardener/ Vinedresser: He lifts up, transplants, moves, readjusts the vine and works with the branch so that the branch (you and I) will be fruitful.
- **Again, Jesus wants to reveal the nature of God to us.**
- He helps us out of the dirt...sin, poor identity, addictions, pride, etc.
- He engages you, pulls you out of the dirt, restores, **that you may be fruitful.**
- This may be painful because our bent is to go back in the dirt, to return to what we know. Our Father responds by tying you off out of the dirt (old patterns and sin) and reminds us we were not made for that.
- We know in our heart we can't return to our old life; relationships may end, a job may end, habits may change.

**He cuts away every branch in me that bears no fruit:** God begins to cut away things that steal life from us.

- Those are things that rob us from the life God wants to give.
- We can't live in today and carry yesterday.
- **There are things you are carrying or are working hard on to keep or maintain that do not create life in us or through us.** God wants to cut it away.
- It might be relationships, habits, persona or even a focus, a dream, or things we pursue we think will satisfy- but only God can!
- Be grateful that God cuts away dead wood from our life. Be grateful for closed doors and relationships that did not work out when you were away from God.

Is there something in your life that God is cutting away, but you continue to hold onto it or carry around with you?

**God wants to do a new thing and wants us to be fruitful and to produce life.**

**John 15:3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you.

-The disciples believed him to be Savior and that is enough.

**John 15:4** Remain in me, as I also remain in you.

Jesus tells us that He is committed to us and wants us to be committed to Him. He uses the word remain or abide 11 times in 11 verses.

Jesus: "I want my life to flow into your life, so I want you to stay, abide, remain or to live in Me."

**John 15:4** No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

- Remember, there is a difference between fruitfulness and busyness, in doing for the Lord and receiving from the Lord.
- Examples from Ken Crockett: How complicated following God had become according to the ultra-religious of Jesus' day:
  - o You could not spit on the Sabbath because it would disturb the dirt and you would be guilty of plowing.
  - o You could not swat a fly on the Sabbath because you would be guilty of hunting.
  - o A woman could not look at her reflection because she might see a gray hair and pluck it out, which would be doing work.

Self-improvement is not spiritual transformation.

**Matthew 9:36** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

- Rules serve a good purpose. They let us know what we are not to do and how we are to do certain things, but they cannot redeem. They cannot change your heart. They point out sin, but **self-improvement does not equal spiritual transformation.**
- We need Jesus to truly change us, not to just improve us.

**John 15:5** I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Jesus wants us to be more like Him. He wants us to have character, to desire His will, and His way. He wants us to learn to be loved well and then, in turn, learn to love others well. **Most of us really don't know how to allow God to love us well. Many of us are more comfortable serving Him than being close to Him.**

**V. 5 Apart from me you can do nothing:** This is a challenge to our flesh, our independence, and our self-sufficiency. True transformation only happens through connected to Him.

We can get stuck in the performance trap. We gauge our worth on what we produce. Jesus is reminding us that our spiritual life produces fruit (**change**) because Jesus is at work in us. We present ourselves to Him and that He may work in us and through us. We present ourselves in relationship with Jesus (**surrender**). We present ourselves to the word of God (**His will**). We present ourselves in prayer (**conversation, dependence, and relationship**). We present ourselves to others in biblical community so that Jesus may do His work in and through us (**church on mission**). Showing up and presenting yourself to Jesus is half the battle. The primary work is to remain in Him.

**John 15** If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

- We can disconnect in our relationship with Jesus.

What things, what desires cut us off from God?

**The contrast is clear.**

- Remain in Him and He will help you bear fruit.
- If you stay connected and pursue Him, you will bear fruit.

- People may say they can maintain and grow their own faith without a church, but it is unlikely because **biblical community won't let you get to a place where you are disconnected.**

**John 15: 7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

**Part 1: Remain in Me**- to stay, abide, remain or to live in.

**Part 2: And My words remain in you**- Reading the word, listening to His word being spoken, studying the scriptures.

**Part 3: Ask whatever you wish (desire)...**

Biblehub: Wish or desire is commonly used of the Lord extending His "best-offer" to the believer - wanting (desiring) to birth His (faith) in us which also empowers, manifests His presence to us, His kingdom to us.

God desires for us to see prayers answered as part of a fruitful life and to build faith.

**John 15: 8** This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

- Your fruitfulness, transformation, and pursuit of Him brings glory to God.

**John 15: 9** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

- We did not get discounted love.
- We did not get leftover love.
- As the Father loves Jesus, so God loves you.
- We love differently based on blood relatives, friends, acquaintances, but God does not love this way
- Some of us feel more comfortable with a distant love. We think "If you get too close, then you will see what I'm *really* like."

**John 15:10** If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

- We cannot be loved by God and remain in sin with no conviction or sorrow.
- If His life is flowing in you, you will sense and feel what he does through the Holy Spirit.

- When we sin, it blocks God's love the way a cloud blocks the sun on a cloudy day. The sun is still there and doesn't change, but impacts our ability to receive all it offers; light, warmth, comfort, etc.
- It is the same with the invitation of Jesus. His love never fails but our ability to receive it may be hindered by the sin in our lives.

Joy is not based on circumstance. It is a state of being. Joy is a fruit of what the Holy Spirit works to develop in us through our revelation of God's love.

- Everything does not have to be perfect for us to live in joy and with joy.
- We need to allow ourselves to be loved by God where we are and how we are. This is transformational. The more you know God's love, the more you will change.
- Love demands a sense of vulnerability. We can't be loved well and not trust well. The measure of our love of God will determine the ability to receive the love of God.
- Jesus is telling us we must stay, remain, abide, and live in His love.

*"Lord, I know you are my true source and what I most desire. You have good planned for me and you want me to be fruitful, to be more and more like Jesus in every way. Because of my faith in Jesus, I am secure. I can rest because you are at work in me. Lord, help me to remain and live in You just as you are committed to staying connected to me. I really want to know You, to truly live and trust in You. I know without you there is no real transformation, no real hope, no real abundant life. Teach me your ways, teach me to walk with you daily. Teach me to rely on you. Reveal to me how fruitful life can be as I look to you.*

*Show me the areas that are stealing life from me, the areas not connected to you. Parts of my heart and life that rob me of love, joy, energy and time. Help me to surrender these areas to you and allow you to remove them. Grant me your grace Lord!*

*Let Your words take up residence in me. May they grow and may they overflow into every area of my life. May my prayers be powerful and effective because they are squarely found within your will.*

*Lord, make me a follower of Jesus, a disciple who is fruitful. Transform me. Teach me Lord to stay, abide, remain and live in your love. Teach me to receive it, to trust your love in every season because your love never fails. Teach me to explore the height, the depth, the length and width of your love and may I never cease to be amazed that I have access, at all time, to all that you are. May my heart and life be filled with your joy and that this joy would be complete in me through you, Jesus. Lord, you*

*are good and I place all of my hope in you. Teach me to be profoundly loved. In your best moments and worst moments may I trust your love for me."*